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Résumé de l'article

In both Duncan Campbell Scott's administration and his poetry, he showed that Native culture was obsolete, and the Native peoples' only hope for survival was to relinquish their culture and merge with dominant Canadian society. Characteristically, Scott portrays title characters as individuals caught in a transitional stage between Native and white cultures and unable to attain peace in either world.

## "VERILY, THE WHITE MAN'S WAYS WERE THE BEST": DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT, NATIVE CULTURE, AND ASSIMILATION

*Lisa Salem-Wiseman*

"It is the opinion of the writer that . . . the Government will in time reach the end of its responsibility as the Indians progress into civilization and finally disappear as a separate and distinct people, not by race extinction but by gradual assimilation with their fellow-citizens."

(Scott, *Administration of Indian Affairs* 27)

From 1913 to his retirement in 1931, Duncan Campbell Scott served as the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs in Canada, administering the federal government's policy of assimilation. During this period, he achieved success as a poet, producing several volumes of poetry, including a number of poems which have Native people as their subjects. Of the number of literary critics who have addressed Scott's "Indian poems" over the last two decades,<sup>1</sup> most have argued that a contradiction exists between Scott's portrayal of Native people in his poetry, and his advocacy of assimilation in his official capacity as the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs.<sup>2</sup> Robert L. McDougall has suggested that Scott's career as an administrator for the Department of Indian Affairs was merely his job, an "outer life" which allowed him little or no expression of his true feelings, while the poetry which he wrote served as a more accurate reflection of his "inner life." Many critics of Scott's poetry seem to agree with this separation of the two aspects of his life. Stan Dragland has remarked that "it is hard to reconcile the official Scott with the poet we know from the Indian poems" (*Criticism* 180).

The question often asked is: was Duncan Campbell Scott a racist hypocrite or, as Melvin Dagg maintains, a sensitive civil servant who was able to justify the policies of his department only by repressing his true feelings, which found voice in his poetry and

short fiction (181-90)? It is generally noted that Scott's administrative writing is supportive of assimilation while his poetry reveals sympathy and compassion for the Native peoples. However, as I will demonstrate in this paper, an examination of Scott's writing reveals a much greater consistency than previously thought to exist. In an earlier article,<sup>3</sup> I argued that the "Indian Poems" represent an imaginative expression of the same colonialist ideology which informed Scott's administration of the government's policy of systematic assimilation. In that article, I focused on Scott's advocacy of intermarriage or "miscegenation" as a step on the road to assimilation. Scott shared the common belief that Native peoples possessed an innate savagery which was transmitted through the blood; miscegenation, then, would dilute any undesirable qualities and render the Native peoples more receptive to the ways of civilization. In this paper, I will expand upon my earlier arguments and continue to explore Scott's belief in the necessity of assimilation, with considerable attention paid to Scott's administrative career, as well as to his poetry.

The policy which Duncan Campbell Scott inherited and administered for nearly twenty years was based on the idea that it was the duty of the representatives of the British Empire to "civilize" the Native peoples, who were thought of as essentially "savage." His poetry, while revealing sympathy and compassion toward individual Native characters, reveals a view consistent with the policies of the Department of Indian Affairs: he believed that Native culture was obsolete, and the Native peoples' only hope for survival was to relinquish their culture and merge with dominant Canadian society.

The question of Duncan Campbell Scott's attitude toward Native people has recently become the focus of much speculation. It is important that future readers of Scott's poetry do not submit to the temptation to dismiss his work as merely the expression of a racist mind, but attempt to understand more fully his attitude toward the Native people who figured so prominently in both his "outer" life at the Department of Indian Affairs and his more private "inner" life as expressed in his poetry and short fiction.

In Canada, during the early twentieth century, it was commonly believed that in order for Native people to survive as individuals, all things that made their culture unique and distinct from

those of other Canadians had to be destroyed. As Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Scott considered himself to be responsible for urging the Native peoples toward "civilization" and ensuring that they did not revert to their "savage" or "pagan" ways. In a memoir written shortly after the death of Scott, E.K. Brown, who had been a frequent correspondent and close friend of his, wrote that Scott's "conception of the national duty to the Indians was simple and sound" (xxv). According to Brown, Scott believed in the goal of the government's policy, which was that "by education and encouragement the Indians were to cease being interesting exotic relics and practise trying to hold their own in a society which could not be bent in their direction" (xxvi).

In 1914, the Indian Act was amended on Scott's recommendation. In a memo written May 5, 1919 to Arthur Meighen, who was then Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Scott outlined the details of the amendment:

Sub-section 2 of Section 149 of the Indian Act makes it illegal for an Indian to participate in any stampede in aboriginal costume outside his own reserve. The penalty, on summary conviction, is \$25.00 or imprisonment for a month, or both penalty and imprisonment.<sup>4</sup>

In a July, 1916 letter to R.B. Bennett, the member of parliament for Calgary, Scott explained the purpose of the amendment:

The purpose of the Amendment to the Act was to prevent the Indians from being exploited as a savage or semi-savage race, when the whole administrative force of the Department is endeavouring to civilize them.<sup>5</sup>

Prior to the amendment, the potlatch as well as certain dances practised in the western provinces were forbidden under Section 149 (formerly Section 114), but Scott had not been satisfied with these restrictions. He felt that any gathering which contributed to keeping Native cultures alive counteracted his department's efforts to transform Native peoples into members of a progressive society. In 1921, Scott wrote to Commissioner W.M. Graham:

It has always been clear to me that the Indians must have some sort of recreation, and if our agents would endeavour to substitute reasonable amusements for this senseless drumming and dancing, it would be a great assistance.<sup>6</sup>

In 1931, Scott described the problems which the organization of events such as the Calgary Stampede caused for his department:

The department is confronted with serious problems in the slow process of weaning the Indian from his primitive state. For some of the obstacles to progress the public must be held responsible. In the minds of the promoters of fairs, stampedes and affairs of the kind, particularly in the western provinces, the Indian is regarded as an asset when decked out in feathers and war-paint, and exhibited for the entertainment of the curious. In this way the Indians are induced to leave their reserves for considerable periods, and generally at times of the year when they should be engaged with their agricultural duties. (*Administration of Indian Affairs* 25)

Many bands wished to participate in events such as the Calgary Stampede, but due to the 1914 amendment were forbidden to do so. In a memo to Arthur Meighen, dated May 5, 1919, Scott explained his reasons for forbidding Native people to attend the Stampede in traditional dress:

Harvesting will likely have begun about the date of the meeting of the stampede or shortly after it. We have found from experience that the Indians who attended these celebrations would not settle down to work after they returned to their reserves.<sup>7</sup>

It was Scott's hope that "if they are not to go in costume and take part in exhibition dances and processions, the temptation to leave the reserve will be considerably weakened."<sup>8</sup>

Scott believed that, apart from encouraging "savage" customs and behaviour, any pageants, dances or gatherings which involved the participation of Native people in traditional costume interfered with the Native peoples' agricultural pursuits, which the Department considered to be an important element of the civilizing process. In a letter of July 28, 1931 to Thomas G. Murphy, the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Scott expressed an opinion that the Indians who insisted upon participating in such cultural events were "squandering their time and rendering nugatory our policy of making them self-sufficient through farming operations."<sup>9</sup>

It was Scott's opinion that Native people would survive only if they were to merge with the dominant society. By outlawing important elements of Native culture, Scott hoped that Native peoples would turn away from what he perceived to be the past

and join the present by pursuing farming and a "civilized" way of life. In a letter to Chief Sampson of the Hobbema Reserve in Alberta, dated July 9, 1925, he wrote: "It is only by looking after your farming and cattle industry that you will be able to advance."<sup>10</sup> The goal of federal Indian policy was to transform the Native peoples of western Canada into self-sufficient farmers, and any activity which interfered with farming operations was regarded as a hindrance to the efforts of the department to civilize the Native peoples.

In a letter to E.K. Brown in 1941, Scott stated his opinion regarding Native religious traditions:

One can hardly be sympathetic with the contemporary Sundance or Potlatch when one knows that the original spirit has departed and that they are largely the opportunities for debauchery by low white men. (McDougall 26)

Believing that all aspects of Native culture belonged to the past, Scott viewed Native religions, traditions, and customs as meaningless and irrelevant rituals which had persisted from an earlier age of "savage" glory, and served only as a form of entertainment for "low white men."

The goal of federal Indian policy was to lead the Native people from "wardship" to economic and social self-sufficiency. The encouragement of agricultural activities was viewed by the federal government as the most effective means to achieving self-sufficiency among the Native peoples of western Canada, in spite of the fact that since the turn of the century, government policy had restricted Native farmers' use of modern farming techniques, and inhibited the sale of their produce on the open market.<sup>11</sup> Scott believed the government's policy to be extremely effective, and attributed what he perceived as its success to himself and his department. He wrote of the western bands: "The department has made these Indians self-supporting in two generations; a remarkable transition" (*Administration* 10).

In his capacity as Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Scott concerned himself with improving the existing policy in order to render it more effective in achieving the assimilation of Native peoples into the general population. As a poet, while he expressed a great deal of compassion for the Native peoples and eloquently mourned the passing of their culture, he also revealed the belief, consistent with the policy which he administered, that

the death of Native culture was inevitable. For Scott, as we have seen, all that is unique about Native culture was embodied by the romantic image of the noble, stoic warrior. This image appealed to Scott's poetic sensibility, but he was certain that it had no place in the modern, "progressive" world of the twentieth century. Therefore, he believed it was in the best interests of the Native peoples to assimilate themselves into the general population. As E.K. Brown wrote in his memoir to Scott:

The poet in him and the civil servant agreed in believing that the future of the Indians, if it were not to be extinction or degradation, depended on their being brought more and more nearly to the status of the white population. (xxv-xxvi)

An examination of the poetry and short fiction which Duncan Campbell Scott produced after his extensive journeys as a commissioner for Treaty Nine reveals that, although he often expresses compassion, respect and admiration for individual characters, Scott retained the opinion that, Native culture having lost its relevance, the Native people must collectively abandon their cultural traditions and accept the customs, religion, and values of the dominant society in order to survive.

Scott, believing Native culture belonged to the past, viewed Native religions, traditions, and customs as rituals which had persisted from an earlier, "savage" age, but which were no longer relevant. This attitude is evident in the poem "A Scene at Lake Manitou," written in 1923, but not published until 1935, when it appeared in *The Green Cloister* (48-53). The central character is a Native woman who, like many of Scott's Native characters, is torn between two cultures and two belief systems. "The Widow Frederick / Whose Indian name means Stormy Sky" (25-26), is watching over her dying son Matanack, who has been "slain by the foe / That had slain his father" (123-4), presumably a disease which had been introduced into the community by the white traders. As Matanack lies near death, his mother recalls the times which she and her son had spent together, learning the skills required for a life of hunting and trapping:

She had taught him how and where  
To lay the rabbit snare,  
And how to set  
Under the ice, the net,

The habits of shy wild things  
Of the forest and marsh. (47-52)

To her son's "inherited store" (53) of innate knowledge, Stormy Sky "had added all her lore" (54) in order to provide him with the necessary expertise for their way of life. As the setting of this poem is "a cluster of canvas tents" (19) on "the rocky point" (18) above a fur-trading post, these skills would be put to use, not for procuring sustenance, but for trading.

Thus, Stormy Sky is caught between two worlds, using traditional hunting and trapping methods to purchase European-made goods from the fur-traders. She is also caught between two systems of belief. As Stormy Sky watches over her son, her mind turns to "thoughts of Nanabojou / And the powerful Manitou / That lived in the lake" (70-72). However, these thoughts are "Mingled with thoughts of Jesus / Who raised a man from the dead, / So Father Pacifique said" (73-75). Inspired by the teachings of the local priest, she turns in desperation to Christianity in the hope of receiving a similar miracle:

She had prayed to their Jesus,  
She had called on Mary His mother  
To save him, to keep him forever! (78-80)

Stormy Sky's belief in the story of Jesus's resurrection of Lazarus leads her to believe in the possibility of physical resurrection through the use of the holy water and the scapular:

The Holy Water and the Scapular!  
She had used all the Holy Water  
Father Pacifique had given her;  
He had worn his Scapular  
Always, and for months had worn hers too. (81-85)

After her prayers prove to be in vain, she reaches the conclusion that "There was nothing more to be done / That Christians could do" (86-87).

Filled with despair, she turns to her Native religion, calling upon "the Powers of the Earth and the Air, / The Powers of the Water" (88-89) to save her son from death. She offers "All her treasured possessions" (92)—the manufactured symbols of the dominant civilization purchased from the traders—"to the Manitou / That lived in the lake" (90-91), hoping the life of her son



would be spared in return. Scott depicts this act as a reversion to pagan frenzy:

The children heard her scream,  
The trader and the loafing Indians  
Saw her rush into the tent and bring out her blankets  
And throw them into the lake,  
Screaming demented screams,  
Dragging her treasures into the light,  
Scattering them far on the water. (94-100)

While Scott presents Stormy Sky's prayers to Jesus as harmless, albeit futile, her appeal to the Manitou is described as an irrational and reckless destruction of her most valued possessions. Even "the loafing Indians" (95) are astonished by her atavistic behaviour and, assuming that she is hysterical with grief, they attempt to subdue her:

First of them all, her gramophone,  
She hurled like a stone;  
And they caught her and held her  
Just as she swung aloft the next of her treasures  
Her little hand-sewing-machine.  
They threw her down on the rock  
And five men held her until,  
Not conquered by them,  
But subdued by her will  
She lay still. (101-110)

The woman's actions are once again "all in vain" (121); her son's death is inevitable. After the death of Matanack, Stormy Sky regains her composure in a manner reminiscent of the abandoned woman in "The Forsaken," who "smoothed her dark locks under her kerchief" and "Composed her shawl in state" (71-72):

She put up her hair that had fallen over her eyes,  
And with movements, weary and listless,  
Tidied her dress. (124-26)

Scott showed the greatest admiration for Native people when they were behaving with the nobility and stoicism which he associated with a heroic Indian past. The character of Stormy Sky embodies this stoicism when she accepts the death of Matanack, finding com-

fort in a blending of elements from her Native religion with her understanding of Christian concepts:

He had gone to his father  
 To hunt in the Spirit Land  
 And to be with Jesus and Mary. (127-29)

The brief reversion to her traditional form of prayer is depicted as nothing more than an act of temporary insanity, an irrational frenzy inspired by grief and despair.

Through the encouragement of intermarriage, education, and agricultural pursuits, Scott, as the chief administrator of the Department of Indian Affairs, foresaw a day when Native peoples would relinquish their customs and traditions. As he stated in 1921, "Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department."<sup>12</sup> A Christian himself, Scott believed that conversion was an integral part of the assimilation process, but acknowledged that the transition would not be immediate and, although beneficial to the race in general, would be difficult for many individuals. In "A Scene at Lake Manitou," neither Christian prayer nor offerings to the Manitou are able to save Stormy Sky's son. Christian concepts are still too foreign to her to offer a solution, and the rituals of her Native religion are portrayed as a regression to a primitive form of worship. After his death, she is able to find solace only in a vision which combines both Christian and Native religious imagery.

In Scott's "James Bay Diary," the entry for July 6, 1905 mentions a "long argument with the medicine man" which was motivated by the complaints of the local Indian agent that the medicine man had been conducting a spirit dance. The argument led to an encounter between Scott and "Powassan the head medicine man" during which Scott reminded Powassan that such rituals were forbidden under federal legislation and "warned the Indians not to dance."<sup>13</sup> In "Powassan's Drum," written in the winter of 1925 and published in 1926 in *The Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott*, Scott addressed this subject poetically (59-63). He created the character of Powassan, a powerful medicine man who, through his rhythmic drumming, is able to penetrate the physical universe and induce a trance-like, hypnotic state:

THROB—throb—throb—throb;—  
 Is this throbbing a sound  
 Or an ache in the air?  
 Pervasive as light,  
 Measured and inevitable,  
 It seems to float from no distance,  
 But to live in the listening world—  
 Throb—throb—throb—throb—throbbing  
 The sound of Powassan's Drum. (1-9)

Although Scott defended his official stance by stating that "the original spirit has departed"<sup>14</sup> from Native religious customs, he appears to contradict this statement in "Powassan's Drum" by acknowledging the immense power possessed by the medicine man. However, although his official reasons for supporting severe restrictions upon Native cultural practices are not evident in this poem, "Powassan's Drum" does reveal that Scott regarded the continuation of these practices as a threat to the necessary "civilization" and assimilation of Native peoples.

The power with which Scott invested the character of Powassan has been the subject of a great deal of speculation by his critics. Gerald Lynch has stated that Scott's "respect for. . . [Indian] culture is evident in the powerfully incantatory rhythms of 'Powassan's Drum'" (54). John Masefield, in the foreword to the English edition of *The Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott*, noted that "the incantation in the poem makes one see what the magician invoked." Scott's Powassan, who stands in opposition to Christianity and rational thought, is certainly depicted as a formidable opponent. Through his ceaseless drumming he is able to alter the perception of the physical world, making it seem "lost and shallow" (19), and to draw all living beings into his power:

The live things in the world  
 Hear it and are silent.  
 They hide silent and charmed  
 As if guarding a secret; (48-51)

However, although Powassan is certainly a powerful figure, his power presents a negative force, fueled by hatred and superstition. As E. Palmer Patterson has stated in "The Poet and the Indian: Indian Themes in the Poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott and John Collier," which appeared in *Ontario History* in the summer

of 1967, Scott's depiction of the medicine man "calls attention to the malevolent and occult aspect which the poet attributes to the Indian" (72). Powassan is described as a savage figure who, "Wizened with fasting" (11), "fierce with thirst" (12), "parched with anger" (67), and "famished with hatred" (68), crouches in his "dwarf wigwam" (10) and conjures a monstrous creation inspired by his obsessive hatred. Scott's medicine man offers only blind hatred and superstition to his people; his vision excludes love and reason.

The medicine man's threat lies in his ability to create an alternate reality. Powassan beats upon his drum in "memory of hated things dead. . . / Or in menace of hated things to come" (64,66), and his drumming summons the dark forces of the universe, as a cloud covers the sun and "An infusion of bitter darkness / Stains the sweet water of twilight" (87-88). Powassan's incantations culminate in the appearance of a headless Indian:

Then from the reeds stealing,  
A shadow noiseless,  
A canoe moves noiseless as sleep,  
Noiseless as the trance of deep sleep  
And an Indian still as a statue  
Moulded out of deep sleep,  
Headless, still as a headless statue  
Moulded out of deep sleep,  
Sits modelled in full power. (89-97)

In this passage, Scott introduces the apparition of the headless Indian, repeating the word "sleep" four times to emphasize the fact that this figure has arisen, like a nightmare, from the sleep of the rational, conscious mind.

The Indian's body, from which the head has been severed, is "Haughty in manful power" (98), embodying instinct and passion separated from the rational mind. But it is also described as being "Headless and impotent" (99), because its power, and that of Powassan, is unfocused, lacking reason to give it direction. The headless Indian is "The translation into sight" (114) of the medicine man's "viewless hate" (115). Powassan's hatred, Scott is suggesting, is "viewless" because it lacks a rational focus, and therefore his magic succeeds only in creating the illusion of power in the "impotent" figure of the headless Indian.

The vision conjured by Powassan is a noble Indian figure, reminiscent of past Indian glory:

The Indian fixed like bronze  
Trails his severed head  
Through the dead water  
Holding it by the hair,  
By the plaits of hair,  
Wound with sweet grass and tags of silver. (102-7)

His hair is decorated in a traditional fashion with sweet grass and silver tags. The Indian is described as being "fixed like bronze," invoking the image of a stoic Indian brave. This description, coupled with the previous likening of the figure to a "statue," suggests that the figure is locked in the past, unyielding as the times change around it.

As the Indian's canoe drifts through the water, the disembodied head looks up past its rightful place upon the shoulders of the body to connect with the storm clouds which had been gathering power throughout Powassan's incantations:

The face looks through the water  
Up to its throne on the shoulders of power,  
Unquenched eyes burning in the water,  
Piercing beyond the shoulders of power  
Up to the fingers of the storm cloud. (108-12)

The universe is unable to offer a rational response to the medicine man's vision:

The sun could not answer.  
The tense sky burst and went dark  
And could not answer. (119-21)

But, as Scott writes, "the storm answers" (122). The medicine man's vision, arising from anger and hatred and separated from rational thought, can only result in chaos and destruction. The violent, apocalyptic storm at the end of the poem represents the world's reaction to Powassan's magic:

Uprises the storm  
And crushes the dark world;  
At the core of the rushing fury  
Bursting hail, tangled lightning  
Wind in a wild vortex

Lives the triumphant throb—throb—throb—throb—  
Throbbing of Powassan's Drum. (124-30)

Duncan Campbell Scott was acutely aware of the anger which many Native people felt at the intrusion of the federal government into their lives. Almost immediately following his appointment to the position of Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs in 1913, Scott had been confronted by Native political organizations, such as the Council of the Tribes and the League of Indians of Canada, who encouraged cultural revitalization as a means of gaining power and control of their own affairs. In the 1920s, the Confederacy of the Six Nations campaign for sovereignty, which was referred to by Scott as that "so-called status claim,"<sup>15</sup> caused Scott a great deal of consternation. He strongly opposed the activities of such organizations, which he regarded as subversive, and detrimental to the government's goal of assimilation. Although he acknowledged the Native peoples' resistance to the assimilationist policies of the government, Scott clearly believed that adaptation to a changing world, and not a return to traditional beliefs and customs, was the answer to the difficulties experienced by the Native peoples.

In 1896, Charcoal, a Native man from the Blood Reserve in Alberta, was accused of the murder of his wife's lover and, after an extensive manhunt, was captured and hanged for his crime. Charcoal's story is told by Hugh Dempsey in a non-fiction work entitled *Charcoal's World*.<sup>16</sup> Duncan Campbell Scott's short story "Charcoal," first published in *Canadian Magazine* (1904) under the title "Star-Blanket," and republished in *The Circle of Affection* (1947), is Scott's imaginative interpretation of this incident. "Charcoal," as Stan Dragland notes in his introduction to *In the Village of Viger and Other Stories* (1973), is Scott's "only story about 'pure' Indians" (15). Leon Slonim, in his essay, "The Source of Duncan Campbell Scott's 'Charcoal,'" writes:

The real Charcoal had indeed (in October 1896) murdered the Indian who was his wife's lover; he had, moreover, wounded a white farm instructor and shot to death (almost exactly as is described in Scott's story) a Mounted Policeman. For these crimes the real Charcoal had been tried and, in March 1897, executed. (163)

Characteristically, Scott portrays the title character as an individual caught in a transitional stage between Native and white cultures and unable to attain peace in either world.

Scott describes Charcoal as "a mild, big fellow" (216) who possesses an "infantine curiosity" (213) and a desire to conform to the ways of white society:

Charcoal wanted to be what his agent called "a good Indian". He wanted to have a new cooking stove, and a looking-glass. He already had cattle on loan, and was one of the best workers in the hay-fields (212).

In contrast to Charcoal is the character of Bad-young-man, who is lazy, unreliable and follows his own rules, paying no heed to the Indian agent. Bad-young-man "never did a stroke of work" (212), and often "ranged off the reserve into Montana or Kootenay scorn-ing permits [and making] trouble wherever he came" (212).

Conversely, Charcoal accepts the "white man's ways," and his belief in the superiority of these ways is reinforced by the rewards which he is given for his obedience:

More and more evident were the results of his toil and his obedience to his agent and his instructor. He began to see clearly that what they had told him was the truth. He could trace every dollar of the twenty-five he had paid for the medicine-pole-bag to some good stroke of work he had done in the hay-fields. He did not know it, but the agent had asked the Department for lumber to build him a new house, and his chief ambitions were forming solidly in the future. Verily, the white man's ways were the best. (213)

Although Scott himself was in favour of assimilation, this story reveals an awareness of the inner conflict which accompanies the transition to a new way of life. Charcoal is attracted to the benefits of conforming to "the white man's ways," yet he is unable to escape his heritage and is irresistibly drawn to "the old way" of his ancestors, which Scott characterizes as irrational, violent, and vengeful.

Charcoal, angered by his wife's relationship with Bad-young-man, visits his paternal grandfather to ask his advice. Leon Slonim suggests that this character, who does not appear in the documented evidence of Charcoal's trial, was invented by Scott as a means of emphasizing the differences between the "old way" and the "white man's way" (163). The old man, who "had been a mighty warrior in his day," but who could now "only remember the time of his prowess which had gone by" (214), represents an age of savagery; he tells Charcoal stories of his youth, when life

was lived violently and according to a code of vengeance which has become unacceptable in "civilized" society:

That night when he smelt Charcoal's tobacco, his tongue was loosened, and he told many a story of violent deed and desperate death; of how he had killed Crees as if they were coyotes; of how he had shot and scalped whitemen who now seemed to own the prairies, and he had scalps to prove his valour. (214)

The old man's stories of a violent and savage past incite Charcoal to abandon his attempts at being a "good Indian," and inspire what Scott terms a brief "lapse to paganism":

Charcoal was convinced that the old way was a good way, and he went out into the moonlight, unhobbled one of his ponies and rode away furiously, yelling every little while at the moon. (214)

The next morning, once his anger has subsided, Charcoal's brief regression to savagery is forgotten, and he once again "found himself wanting to be a 'good Indian'" (214). However, later that day, while riding to his camp, he shoots Bad-young-man and kills him, marking the beginning of his regression to savagery. He then returns to his grandfather's tepee, where the old man instructs him to kill a white man, in keeping with the "old ways":

After Charcoal had heard what his grandfather had to say, he declared that the old way was the best, that he had done well, and he went out and made his "mark" to kill a white man. (215)

The act of killing his rival ultimately results in Charcoal's exile from both Native and dominant cultures. In order to "make his mark" he attempts to kill a white instructor, and he eventually does kill a policeman. Charcoal becomes a fugitive, running from the police and able to trust neither "the people of his own clan and totem, who had learned well the white man's treachery" (217) nor his own relatives, for "he knew that they would be bribed to hunt him down or lay a trap for him" (218). Scott uses Charcoal's actions as an example of the struggle of "civilization against savagery" (217). Although Charcoal had been attracted by the rewards of a civilized life, he finds himself unable to escape his cultural values, and is led to attempt to settle his conflict with his rival according



to the "old tradition" of savagery. Now he must be dealt with by the forces of civilization:

No one could understand how Charcoal, who wanted to be a 'good' Indian, had done this thing . . . But, whatever reasons he had had, he was now to be caught and punished. It was once more civilization against savagery. Against this one Indian who had dared to follow the old tradition was arrayed all organized law. (217)

After his betrayal by his brother-in-law, Wolf-plume, Charcoal accepts his impending execution as a form of revenge for the deaths of white men at the hands of his ancestors. Scott's notion of an ancient code of retribution is reminiscent of his poem "Watkwenies," in which "vengeance" is described as having once been both "lore and law" (1) for the Native people:

He had thought of many things which he did not understand. He was to be killed in the white man's manner; to his mind it was only vengeance, death for deaths, which the warriors of his own race dealt to their foes in the old days, and in a braver fashion. (221)

A member of a society which is in the process of transition, Charcoal is caught between old and new worlds as he tries desperately to be a "good Indian" yet finds himself drawn toward "paganism." Charcoal longs to become the "good Indian" that the agent expects him to become, but Scott suggests he is prevented by both his heritage and his true nature from attaining his goal. Charcoal's reversion to savagery is depicted as immediate and natural, and he seems to retain none of the "civilized" values which he had held prior to his murder of Bad-young-man. Irrationally, Charcoal chooses to lead the police on "a long and merry chase" (217), rather than to escape by crossing the border. As the chase continues, he grows "more careless and more daring," displaying "an air of reckless contempt" for his pursuers. His inability to control his "savage" impulses results in his death, which is the price he must pay for his reversion to the "old ways" of violence and revenge.

Charcoal's dilemma is the result of the changes which Scott, as Deputy Superintendent General, deemed necessary for the survival of Native peoples. Through his portrayal of Charcoal, Scott reveals sympathy and compassion for the plight of Native individ-

uals who are unable to cope with the changes which are taking place within their society:

They had driven away the buffalo, and made the Indian sad with flour and beef, and had put his muscles into harness. He had only shot a bad Indian, and they rose upon him. His gun had shot a big policeman, and when they had taught his brother-in-law their own idea of fair dealing he was taken in sleep, and now there was to be an end. He did not know what Père Pauquette meant by his prayers, and the presentation of the little crucifix worn bright with many salutations. It was all involved in mystery. (221)

Like Stormy Sky in "A Scene at Lake Manitou," Charcoal possesses only a superficial understanding of Christianity; he listens to the priest's prayers and wears the crucifix, but the deeper meaning behind these practices remains a "mystery" to him. In the moment before his death, Charcoal finally finds peace, attaining "the calm of a stoic" (222) as he breathes in the scents which emanate from the medicine-pole-bag, a remnant of the old ways and a symbol of former Indian power. As in "A Scene at Lake Manitou," relief from the internal dilemma caused by an individual's transition to a new way of life is found through a stoic acceptance of one's own death and, by extension, of the inevitable death of an old way of life which Scott viewed as archaic and obsolete.

As Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Scott was in a position to oversee the death of Native culture. Enfranchisement, involving the relinquishment of Indian status as defined in the Indian Act and the adoption of the privileges and responsibilities of full Canadian citizenship, was the ultimate goal of federal Indian policy. It was commonly believed that, as Native people became educated in the ways of the dominant society, they would choose to assume full citizenship status. In 1931 Scott wrote:

there are communities of Indians who for the most part show little trace of their ancestry, either in their physiognomy, colour or habits of life. There is no reason why these groups should not take their place in the community and assume the responsibility of citizenship. (*Administration* 26)

In order to become enfranchised, an applicant was required to demonstrate that he had both abandoned his traditional way of life and had become self-supporting. As Native people gained the

franchise, their shares of reserve land would become individual freeholds, and thus all Native people would eventually be integrated into the general population and the reservation system would become obsolete.

According to Scott, enfranchisement "has been the whole purpose of Indian education and advancement since the earliest times."<sup>17</sup> In 1857, the legislature of the United Canadas had passed an "Act to encourage the gradual Civilization of the Indian Tribes in this Province." In 1869, an "Act for the gradual enfranchisement of Indians" was passed and, in 1876, a provision for enfranchisement was included in the first consolidated Indian Act. However, in spite of these provisions, very few Native people chose to become full citizens. Scott reported that, in the years between Confederation and 1918, only 102 people had been enfranchised (Taylor 143).

The reluctance of Native people to accept the franchise was interpreted as being due to the fact that many bands feared the loss of their reserve lands, and in 1918 Arthur Meighen, then Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, introduced an amendment to the Indian Act which was designed to resolve this problem. The amendment, which became section 122A, removed the provision which required a Native person to be in possession of land on a reserve in order to become enfranchised. Scott was in favour of the amendment:

Among the more progressive bands the lands are all occupied . . . There are Indians from such bands who . . . have demonstrated their ability to support themselves and to exercise the rights and privileges of enfranchised persons, and it was, therefore, considered undesirable that their enfranchisement should be longer obstructed.<sup>18</sup>

Scott believed that enfranchisement was the only answer to what was perceived as "the Indian problem." Through the encouragement of Native people to renounce their Indian status in favour of full citizenship, the goal of federal Indian policy would be achieved.

In his opinion, there was no reason that such bands should remain under the protection of the government. However, he was extremely disappointed with the fact that, "while a considerable number have taken advantage of this opportunity, the majority cling to wardship" (*Administration* 26). He concluded that, although many Native people had become sufficiently "advanced"

in their ways and attitudes to warrant full citizenship and its accompanying responsibilities, many refused the franchise because of an unwillingness to give up the protection afforded them under the Indian Act. He wrote in 1931:

This attitude is largely actuated by the exemption provided for Indians under the Act, such as freedom from taxation, and the protection of property, both real and personal on an Indian reserve from seizure for debt. (26)

Although Scott acknowledged the reluctance of some Native people to accept the franchise, and professed an understanding of their desire to "continue in that state of tutelage" to which they had become accustomed, he felt that enfranchisement was a movement toward civilization, and he viewed those who did not support it as obstacles to the progress of their race. In 1918, Scott suggested that the franchise be offered to Native soldiers, as a means of demonstrating to other Native people that "their best interests lie in moving forward and supporting the Government rather than in lagging behind and being indifferent and hostile to the administration of their affairs."<sup>19</sup>

John Leonard Taylor, in *Canadian Indian Policy During the Interwar Years* (1984), suggests that Scott "developed and initiated the idea of compulsory enfranchisement independently, although he became aware of draft legislation for a similar purpose that was before the U.S. House of Representatives at about the same time" (147). In his annual report for the year ending March 31, 1919, Scott proposed compulsory enfranchisement in cases where it was believed that "the continuance of wardship was no longer in the interests of the public or the Indians (qtd. in Taylor 146). In 1920, Bill 14 was passed to amend the Indian Act to include Sections 107 to 111, empowering the Superintendent General to enfranchise any Native person over the age of twenty-one who was deemed fit for enfranchisement. The ensuing protests of Native peoples led to a series of hearings, at which Scott defended the position of the government:

I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that this country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone . . . But after one hundred years, after being in close contact with civilization it is enervating to the individual or to a band to continue in that state of tutelage, when he or they are able to take their

position as British citizens or Canadian citizens, to support themselves, and stand alone.<sup>20</sup>

The introduction of compulsory enfranchisement was a natural extension of Scott's position that "the happiest future for the Indian race is absorption into the general population" (Scott, "Indian Affairs" 622-23). Federal Indian policy had developed with enfranchisement as its goal, and Scott believed that it was the duty of the department to encourage the Native peoples to fulfil this goal. He did not consider the introduction of the compulsory enfranchisement clause to represent undue interference on the part of the government, but rather he saw it as a necessary step toward the end of the "Indian problem." When Bill 14 was passed, Scott wrote, in a letter to W.A. Boys: "I am gratified that we have got some progressive legislation at last."<sup>21</sup>

Duncan Campbell Scott did not question the ideology which supported the government's policy concerning Native peoples. He believed that the days of a vital Native culture had passed. For Scott, who viewed Native culture as obsolete, "progress" meant the disappearance of a distinct Native culture, and the total absorption of Native peoples into the general population of Canada. Scott's artistic representations of Native people, while certainly sympathetic, should be regarded as an artist's attempt to preserve for future generations all that he considered admirable about a people who, he assumed, were destined to disappear. Armand Garnet Ruffo's "Poem for Duncan Campbell Scott," which appeared in the second volume of *Gatherings: The En'owkin Journal of First North American Peoples* (1991), provides a fitting comment on Duncan Campbell Scott and the "Indian question":

They say he asks too many questions but  
doesn't wait to listen. Asks  
much about yesterday, little about today  
and acts as if he knows tomorrow.

Others don't like the way he's always busy writing  
stuff in the notebook he carries. Him,  
he calls it poetry

and says it will make us who are doomed  
live forever. (173)<sup>22</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> These include Melvin H. Dagg, Stanley L. Dragland, Gerald Lynch, and Robert L. McDougall.

<sup>2</sup> Notable exceptions include L.P. Weis's "D.C. Scott's View of History and the Indians," *Canadian Literature* 111 (Winter 1986): 27-40, and "Chapter Nine: The Bureaucrat's Indian" in Daniel Francis's *The Imaginary Indian* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992): 196-218. E. Palmer Patterson's "The Poet and the Indian: Indian Themes in the Poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott and John Collier," *Ontario History* LIX, 2 (June 1967): 69-78, although written more than twenty-five years ago, also addresses the issue of an ideological consistency between Scott's poetry and his administrative writings.

<sup>3</sup> "Her Blood is Mingled With Her Ancient Foes: Blood, Race and 'Miscegenation' in the Work of Duncan Campbell Scott." *Studies in Canadian Literature* 18.1 (Summer 1993): 99-117.

<sup>4</sup> Memo of D.C. Scott to Arthur Meighen, 5 May 1919. Records of the Department of Indian Affairs, PAC RG10, vol. 3821, file 60, 511-5.

<sup>5</sup> Letter of D.C. Scott to R.B. Bennett, July 17, 1916. PAC, RG 10, vol. 3821, file 60, 511-5.

<sup>6</sup> Letter of D.C. Scott to W.M. Graham, 4 October 1921, PAC, RG10, vol. 3826, file 60,511-4A.

<sup>7</sup> Memo of D.C. Scott to Arthur Meighen, 5 May 1919. PAC, RG 10, vol. 3821, file 60, 511-5.

<sup>8</sup> Memo of D.C. Scott to Arthur Meighen, 5 May 1919. PAC, RG 10, vol. 3821, file 60, 511-5.

<sup>9</sup> Memo of D.C. Scott to Thomas G. Murphy, 28 July 1931. PAC, RG 10, vol. 3821, file 60, 511-5.

<sup>10</sup> Letter of D.C. Scott to Chief Sampson of the Hobbema Reserve, Alberta, 9 July 1925. PAC, RG 10, vol. 3821, file 60, 511-5.

<sup>11</sup> See Sarah Carter, "Two Acres and a Cow: 'Peasant' Farming for the Indians of the Northwest, 1889-97," *The Canadian Historical Review* LXX, 1 (March 1989), 27-52. Also see her book *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1990).

<sup>12</sup> Scott, Hearings Testimony, 1921-1922, PAC, RG 10, vol. 6810, file 473, vol. 12.

<sup>13</sup> Scott, "James Bay Diary," 6 July 1905. PAC, RG 10, vol. 1028.

<sup>14</sup> D.C. Scott to E.K. Brown, 2 July 1941. McDougall 26.

<sup>15</sup> Memo of D.C. Scott to Arthur Meighen, 3 May 1920, PAC, RG10, vol. 2285, file 57, 169-1A2.

<sup>16</sup> Hugh Dempsey, *Charcoal's World* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1978).

<sup>17</sup> Scott, Hearings Testimony, 1921-1922, PAC, RG 10, vol. 6810, file 473, vol. 12.

<sup>18</sup> *Canada Sessional Papers*, 1919, No. 27, Report of the Deputy Superintendent General, 21. Qtd. in Taylor, 145.

<sup>19</sup> Letter of D.C. Scott to Arthur Meighen, 15 October 1918. PAC, RG 10, vol. 7484, file 25001, pt. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Scott, Hearings Testimony, 1921-1922, PAC, RG 10, vol. 6810, file 473, vol. 12.

<sup>21</sup> Letter of D.C. Scott to W.A. Boys, 29 June 1920. PAC, RG 10, vol. 6809, file 470-2-3.

<sup>22</sup> *Gatherings: The En'owkin Journal of First North American Peoples* vol. 2 (Penticton: Theytus Books, 1991): 173. Armand Garnet Ruffo is an Ojibway poet from Northern Ontario. A graduate of the Writing Program at the Banff Centre School of Fine Arts, he also holds an Honours Degree in English Literature from the University of Ottawa.

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